

OVERVIEW

1. You can count on God
2. You can count on friendship
3. You can count on prayer

OPENING QUESTION

- Who is someone in your life you know you can count on?

INTRODUCTION

Jesus teaches his followers to pray by telling stories about friendship.

The Parable of the Persistent Friend teaches us to keep talking to God, even if we don't see his answers right away.

A true friend loves regardless of the situation, and a real brother exists to share the tough times.

Proverbs 17:17 Voice

We can learn from the Parable of the Persistent Friend that God is this "true friend" who loves us all the time, regardless of the situation.

More resources at [deepspirituality.com/parables](https://www.deepspirituality.com/parables)

1. YOU CAN COUNT ON GOD

Jesus begins teaching us about prayer by telling us a story about three friends:

Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: "Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.'

– **Luke 11:5-6 NLT**

- **Imagine being the first friend:** it's midnight, and a friend "suddenly" shows up at your place. He is in need, and you have nothing for him. We can guess that your stress level would have increased dramatically.
- **Bang on God's door.** Where do you bring that stress? To another friend, who in this story can represent God.
- **Know that friendships are emotional.** Close friendships are incredibly rewarding, and they bring many encouraging things into our lives, but they also sometimes bring emotions like stress, hurt, and sadness.
- **How does this relate to me?** Sometimes the emotions that come with relationships make us want to avoid being close to people so we can avoid feeling pain. But Jesus teaches us that God is a friend you can count on anytime, day or night, no matter what stress comes into your life.

Pause and reflect

- Have I been experiencing painful feelings in any of my relationships lately (like hurt, sadness, rejection, or pressure)?
- Do I talk to God about my feelings, or do I suppress them, deny them, or only talk to people about them?
- What is the difference between talking to God and talking only to people about my feelings?

NOTES

2. YOU CAN COUNT ON FRIENDSHIP

And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.

– Luke 11:7-8 NLT

- **A friend keeps talking:** Knocking persistently on the door shows that you believe your other friend will eventually get up and help you.
- **You need persistence to have friendships with God and others:** We must learn how to keep asking, talking, and praying to God until we get our prayers answered!
- **Why do we need persistence in friendships?** Persistence pushes past obstacles. In this story, the first person faces some obstacles to getting what he needs: his friend is already in bed, so are his kids, and the door is locked. To keep asking for help would require overcoming obstacles of pride, fear, anxiety, and unbelief.
- **How does this relate to me?** We can run into these same obstacles in our relationships and they can stop us from talking to and connecting with God:
 - **Unbelief:** We don't believe God cares about us, so we won't ask him for what we need.
 - **Fear:** We focus on our circumstances and our own inadequacies instead of God's power to do the impossible.
 - **Pride:** We pretend we can handle pressure in our lives instead of giving it all to God.
 - **Anxiety:** We get consumed by our worries and our need to take control instead of sharing our burdens with God.
- Remember that God is a friend. Believing this will help us stick it out and keep talking to him without letting these obstacles get in our way and make us give up.
- **What about when I don't see God answering my prayers?** This story also addresses something difficult that everyone experiences at some point in their relationship with God: a seemingly-unfulfilled expectation or request.

NOTES

2. YOU CAN COUNT ON FRIENDSHIP (CONT'D)

- **Unfulfilled expectations can lead to bitterness** in any friendship, including one with God.
- **Handle unfulfilled expectations with trust:** One way we can handle these feelings of bitterness, hurt, or discouragement when we don't see God's answers right away is trust.
- **How do we build trust** that God is working for our good as we wait for God's answer to our prayers?
 1. **Make a choice:** We can decide to trust God more than we trust ourselves or our own emotions ([Jeremiah 17:5-8](#)).
 2. **Make an effort:** We can decide to keep making effort in our prayer life by continuing to express our hearts while we wait ([Daniel 9:3-23](#)).
 3. **Make the time:** We can build our trust in God by consistently putting time into remaining close to him. If we take shortcuts or skip out on spending time with God, our trust and faith in him will suffer. When we do spend consistent time with God, we will see spiritual fruit grow in our lives ([John 15:4-5](#)).

Pause and reflect

- Am I known as a persistent friend? Why or why not?
- What obstacles stop me from being bold in prayer?
- How can I start being persistent with God in prayer?

NOTES

3. YOU CAN COUNT ON PRAYER

“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.”

– Luke 11:9-10 NLT

- **Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking!** We will receive what we ask for and find what we are looking for.
- **Keep looking for answered prayers:** Sometimes those prayers take years or decades to be answered. Sometimes God shapes our prayers differently like a great parent, coach, or teacher because he sees what we really want and need.
- **Be confident** from the Scriptures that if we are persistent and determined to talk to God, he will answer our prayers.

Pause and reflect

- What one change do I want to see happen that I can start praying for?